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ABSTRACT

The goal of the High School Reading and Communication Skills Component of the Detroit school desegregation plan was to improve students' reading and communication skills. The program was an integral part of the English curriculum and employed instruction focused upon specific objectives at each grade level. Support services were provided in each high school by at least one reading specialist and one educational technician. Results of a product evaluation of the program showed progress toward the attainment of program objectives. Findings indicated that: (1) students in grade 9 improved their mastery of nine specific skills; (2) grade 10 students demonstrated increasing levels of mastery of reading objectives; (3) the decline in standardized achievement test results for eleventh graders that was evident between 1972 and 1978 halted; and, (4) in January, 1980, 81 percent passed the writing skills area of the High School Proficiency Examination. (Author/MK)

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PRODUCT EVALUATION OF THE HIGH SCHOOL READING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS COMPONENT OF THE DETROIT DESEGREGATION COURT ORDER

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PRODUCT EVALUATION OF THE HIGH SCHOOL READING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS COMPONENT OF THE DETROIT DESEGREGATION COURT ORDER

Abstract

The High School Reading and Communication Skills Component of the Detroit Desegregation Court Order has as its goal the improvement of reading and communication skills of Detroit high school students. This program is an integral part of the English curriculum and employs instruction focused upon specific objectives at each grade level. Additional personnel in the form of at least one reading specialist and one educational technician provide support services at each high school.

Results of an ongoing product evaluation of the component show substantial progress toward attainment of component objectives. Evaluation findings to date are as follows:

1. Students in Grade 9 have shown improvements in their mastery of nine locally identified reading and communication skills as measured by the Ninth Grade Objective Referenced Test of Communication Skills.

2. Grade 10 students have shown increasing levels of mastery of reading objectives as measured by the Michigan Educational Assessment Program test.

3. California Achievement Test results for 1979 and 1980 indicate that the decline in Grade 11 reading achievements, which occurred continuously from 1972 through 1978, has been halted.

4. In January, 1980, 81% of the students in Grades 10 and 11 passed the reading skill area and 54.7% passed the writing skill area of the High School Proficiency Examination.

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PRODUCT EVALUATION OF THE HIGH SCHOOL READING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS COMPONENT OF THE DETROIT DESEGREGATION COURT ORDER

Introduction

The High School Reading and Communication Skills Component of the Detroit school desegregation court order is one of several supplementary educational programs ordered by the court to remedy the effects of past segregation in the Detroit public schools.

The goal of the High School Reading and Communication Skills Component is to improve the reading and communication skills of Detroit high school students.

The ninth grade program is built around nine reading, writing, and study skills objectives identified by Detroit English teachers as essential for ninth graders to possess. The objectives are following written directions, defining words in context, identifying main ideas, drawing valid inferences, using a dictionary, using correct capitalization and punctuation, constructing a sentence, organizing a paragraph, and locating information in a categorical lising.

The tenth grade program provides differentiated instruction in reading for tenth grade students. The program consists of three different English Department courses: Reading Competency, Great Expectations, and Higher Horizons. Top scorers on the spring administration of the Ninth Grade Objective-Referenced Test of Communication Skills are programmed into Great Expectations, a literature course designed to extend their critical thinking skills through reading experiences. Students scoring below the 80% cut-off score are programmed into Reading Competency, a corrective reading course. For the second semester, teacher judgement and test scores determine whether a student is programmed into Higher Horizons (a traditional English experience) or Reading Competency (continued instruction in basic reading skills).

A full semester mandatory speech program is part of the eleventh grade program. A Speech Syllabus, designed by English department heads and speech teachers, is the basic text for the course which may be taught in either the first or second semester. The Reading Competency course is also available for eleventh grade students in need of additional reading skills.

All twelfth grade students are tested on the Detroit Quick Reading Test (DQRT). Students scoring above 79% and/or receiving a recommendation from their teacher are programmed into traditional English course offerings. Others are programmed into Reading Competency.

All high schools have support personnel in the form of at least one reading specialist and one educational technician. They assist in the implementation of the reading program, help to set up inservice programs for teachers, and tutor students with severe reading problems in small Remedial Reading classes available at all grade levels. All other reading classes are taught by English teachers who have been given special reading instruction.

The Research and Evaluation Department began evaluating court-ordered desegregation of the Detroit Public Schools in 1977. From 1977 through 1979 the evaluation was primarily a study of the impact of the overall desegregation effort on attitudes of students, staff and parents, and on student achievements. In the fall of 1979 the emphasis shifted to product (outcome) evaluations of the individual court-ordered educational components. This is a first report on the product evaluation of the High School Reading and Communication Skills Component.

Component Objectives

As a basis for assessing progress toward the goal of the High School Reading and Communication Skills Component, five objectives were included in the product (outcome) evaluation design. These objectives are:

1. Grade 9 students will show significant improvements in mastery of the communication skills assessed by the Ninth Grade Objective-Referenced Test as measured by their pre- and posttest scores;

2. Grade 10 students' attainments of MEAP reading objectives will show significant improvements from year to year;

3. Grade 11 students' reading achievements, as measured on the California Achievement Test, will show significant improvements from year to year;

4. The proportions of high school students passing the High School Proficiency Examination reading and writing tests will increase significantly from year to year;

5. Grade 10 students enrolled in remedial reading courses will show mastery of greater proportions of reading objectives assessed by the Michigan Educational Assessment Program reading test.

Evaluation Findings

Available evidence of progress toward the attainment of the first four objectives of the High School Reading and Communication Skills Component is presented below. Evidence concerning the fifth objective is currently being collected and will be presented in future reports.

Objective #1:	Grade 9 students will show significant improvements in mastery of the communication skills assessed by the Ninth Grade Objective-Referenced Test as measured by their pre- and posttest scores.

The Ninth Grade Objective-Referenced Test assesses nine objectives in three areas: reading, writing, and study skills. The four reading objectives

are following written directions, defining words in context, identifying main ideas, and drawing valid inferences. The three writing objectives are using correct capitalization and punctuation, constructing a sentence, and organizing a paragraph. The two study skills objectives are using a dictionary and locating information in a categorical listing. This test was developed by the Instructional Objectives Exchange to correspond to the objectives developed by Detroit language arts teachers. It was first administered on a city-wide basis in 1978-79. All ninth grade students are pretested in October and posttested in May of each school year. Pre- and posttest data for 1978-79 and 1979-80 are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Percents of Detroit Ninth Grade Students Attaining Mastery of Ninth Grade Communication Skills Objectives*

Objectives	Percents of Students Mastering Objectives					
	1978-1979			1979-1980		
	Pre-test	Post-test	Gain	Pre-test	Post-test	Gain
Following Written Directions	74.1%	92.6%	18.5%	81.1%	91.3%	10.2%
Defining Words in Context	55.4	68.5	13.1	50.6	63.8	13.2
Identifying a Main Idea	48.9	55.9	7.0	56.2	69.0	12.8
Drawing a Valid Inference	42.5	58.2	15.7	52.1	65.3	13.2
Using Correct Capitalization and Punctuation	30.0	52.6	22.6	33.3	54.3	21.0
Constructing a Sentence	53.0	61.9	8.9	44.2	63.7	19.5
Organizing a Paragraph	53.0	73.6	20.6	61.9	76.9	15.0
Using a Dictionary	37.7	73.4	35.7	44.1	58.5	14.4
Locating Information in a Categorical Listing	55.4	74.9	19.5	68.1	82.5	14.4

*As measured by Detroit's Ninth Grade Objective-Referenced Test of Communication Skills.

Pretest-posttest comparisons for each of the two years reveal substantial gains in percents of students mastering each objective.

Objective #2:	Grade 10 students' attainments of MEAP reading objectives will show significant improvements from year to year.

The Grade 10 Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) reading test was administered at Henry Ford and Northern high schools as part of the pilot in the MEAP testing beginning in the fall of 1978. All Detroit high schools participated in the Grade 10 MEAP test for the first time in the fall of 1979. Results for 1978 and 1979 for Henry Ford and Northern high schools are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Percents of Detroit* and Michigan Grade 10 Students Attaining 75 Percent or More of the Reading Objectives Measured on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program Test

Year	Percents of Students Mastering 75% or More of MEAP Reading Objectives	
	City*	State
1978	29.1%	61.0%
1979	38.6	61.0

*Results for Henry Ford and Northern High Schools only.

Henry Ford and Northern high schools provide a reasonable sample of Detroit students. Henry Ford is an integrated school on the outskirts of the city, while Northern is a predominately black inner-city school. The 1979 MEAP results for these two schools show a substantial increase (9.5%) in students passing 75 percent of the objectives over the 1978 results, while state-wide results remained constant.

City-wide data for 1979 and 1980 are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3

Percents of Detroit and Michigan Grade 10 Students Attaining 75 Percent or More of the Reading Objectives Measured on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program Test

Year	Percents of Students Mastering 75% or More of MEAP Reading Objectives	
	City	State
1979	39.1%	61.0%
1980	51.0	Not Available

These data show an even greater increase (11.9%) in the proportion of students passing 75 percent of the MEAP reading objectives than the 1978-79 comparison for the pilot schools. State results are not available for 1980 at this time. They will be presented in future reports.

Objective #3: Grade 11 students' reading achievements, as measured on the California Achievement Test, will show significant improvements from year to year.

From 1972 through 1978 the Tests of Academic Progress, Form S, 1971 edition were administered to all Detroit students in Grade 11. Results of the reading subtest show a steady decline in student achievement in reading from a mean percentile rank of 33 in 1972 to a mean percentile rank of 22 in 1978.

The California Achievement Test, Level 19C, was first administered to students in Grade 11 in April, 1979. It is administered each April on a city-wide basis. Results of the Reading Comprehension subtests for the 1979 and 1980 administrations are summarized in Table 4.

TABLE 4

Means of CAT Reading Subtest* Scores for
Detroit Grade Eleven Pupils
1979-1980

Year	Number of Pupils Tested	Raw Score Mean	Corresponding Derived Score Means		
			Grade Equivalent	National Percentile	Stanine
1979	7,457	21.85	9.6	35	4
1980	6,388	22.05	9.6	35	4

*California Achievement Tests, Reading Comprehension Subtest.

Although no change occurred over this one year period, it should be noted that the steady decline in reading test scores which was observed from 1972 through 1978 was halted.

Objective #4: The proportions of high school students passing the High School Proficiency Examination reading and writing tests will increase significantly from year to year.

The High School Proficiency Examination was administered for the first time in January, 1980, to students in Grades 10 and 11. Results of this administration appear in Table 5.

TABLE 5
Numbers and Percents of Tenth and Eleventh Grade Students Who
Passed the High School Proficiency Examination
Reading and Writing Skill Areas
January, 1980

Grade	Number of Students Tested	Numbers and Percents of Students Who Passed			
		Reading		Writing	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
10	12,134	9,556	78.6%	6,205	51.1%
11	8,395	7,063	84.1	5,020	59.8
City Totals	20,529	16,619	81.0	11,225	54.7

Data from the August, 1980, administration of the High School Proficiency Examination are presented in Table 6. Students tested in August attended a special summer program which focused on the skill areas which they failed to pass in January.

TABLE 6

Numbers and Percents of Eleventh and Twelfth Grade Students Who Passed the High School Proficiency Examination Reading and Writing Skill Areas August, 1980

Grade	Reading			Writing		
	Number Tested	Number Passed	Percent Passed	Number Tested	Number Passed	Percent Passed
11	308	141	45.8%	672	372	55.4%
12	388	196	50.5	1,128	675	59.8
City Totals	696	337	48.4	1,800	1,047	58.2

Objective #5: Grade 10 students enrolled in remedial reading courses will show mastery of greater proportions of reading objectives assessed by the Michigan Educational Assessment Program reading test.

No evidence for the attainment of this objective was collected during the 1979-80 school year. Plans for 1980-81 include the collection of pre- and posttest data from a sample of students at each high school who are enrolled in reading competency and remedial reading classes in Grade 10. All Grade 10 students have been tested on the MEAP reading test during the fall of 1980. A sample of these students will be posttested on the Grade 10 MEAP reading test during April, 1981. Comparison between pre- and posttest scores for these students will provide evidence of progress toward this objective.

Summary and Conclusions

Available evidence presented above, supports the conclusion that progress has been made toward achieving the goal of the High School Reading and Communication Skills Component.

Comparisons of pre- and posttest scores for students in Grade 9 on the Ninth Grade Objective-Referenced Test In Communication Skills show a substantial increase (ranging from 7.0% to 35.7%) in the proportion of students mastering each of the nine objectives assessed.

Grade 10 MEAP results also show improvement (an 11.9% increase in students mastering 75% or more of the objectives) in 1980 as compared with 1979. Although comparable data are available for only a sample of schools for 1978-79 comparisons, city-wide results for those years reflect similar achievement levels. It should be noted that major changes were made in the 1980 test. The language education staff feels that the objectives measured on the MEAP are congruent with the goals of the reading program.

Students in Grade 11 maintained the same level of achievement in 1979 and 1980 on the California Achievement Tests, Reading Comprehension subtest. This finding of no change in average reading achievement level between 1979 and 1980 is evidence of progress in that it attests to the termination of a continuous decline in reading achievement of Grade 11 students which was evidenced from 1972 through 1978.

High School Proficiency Examination results are presented for the first two administrations of the test. January, 1980 results represent the first time students were tested. The Reading results are encouraging with 81% of the students showing mastery on their first attempt. Writing results for January, 1980 indicate the need for more effort, since only 54.7% of the students tested indicated mastery in this area.

During the summer of 1980, a special recourse program for students who had failed one or more skill area portions of the High School Proficiency Examination was offered. At the end of the program these students were given an opportunity to repeat the test in August. Of those who had failed the reading test in January, nearly half (48.4%) passed it in August. For writing, nearly three-fifths (58.2%) of those who failed in January passed in August.

Examination of the results of the High School Proficiency Examination by grade level confirms an anticipated outcome; i.e., the proportion of students passing each of the component related skill areas increased as their grade level increased. This is true for each administration of the test.

The next scheduled administration of the High School Proficiency Examination is January, 1981. Results from this administration will provide additional comparisons and will indicate, for the first time, what proportion of graduates pass the test.

Evidence of progress of students in Grade 10 remedial reading courses will be collected during the second semester of this school year. Results will appear in future reports.